

Date January 3, 2021

Theme

Epiphany

God's People Gather

Prelude Pondering

We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.

Marcel Proust

Call to Worship

Leader: The morning star arises!

People: We shall see and be radiant.

Leader: The new morning has dawned upon us

People: The Holy One blesses us with peace.

Leader: The light of the star will guide us to the Christ child.

People: God is here among us! Let us rejoice and be glad in God's presence.

All: Let us worship God.

Opening Song

The First Nowell

The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell
Born is the King of Israel.

This star drew nigh to the northwest,
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell
Born is the King of Israel.

Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord
That hath made heaven and earth of nought,

And with His blood our life hath brought.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell
Born is the King of Israel.

Prayer of Confession

God of starlight, shine your love into the darkness of our lives. Preoccupied with ourselves, we forget the needs of others; we participate in systems that oppress; we accept violence as a way of life; we fail to respond to the cry of others. May your love fall upon us like rain and wash away our indifference. May your love nourish the tender shoots of care and compassion. May we grow into people who live in righteousness and work for justice for all your children. Amen.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Lift up your eyes and see the grace of God poured out into your lives. The light of God shines through the darkness. Our hearts rejoice, for Christ is in our midst.

People: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God. Amen.

Sharing the Peace of Christ

Song

Dona Nobis Pacem

Dona nobis

Pacem, pacem

Dona nobis pacem.

(repeat 2x)

God's Word is Proclaimed

Children's Time

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and

kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Sermon

No Ordinary Light

Responding to God's Word

Statement of Belief Creed for Epiphany, by Andreas Wagner

I believe in God, the creator of the universe, who spoke, "Let there be light!" and there was light, setting in motion all of creation and blessing it to this day. I believe in Jesus Christ, the light of the world that shines in the darkness. The darkness cannot overcome it. He embodied humanity in the image of God. In kindness, truthfulness, humility and devotion, He suffered for the greater good. He was and is the Son of God. He died on

the cross for us, God's saving grace! I believe in the Holy Spirit, the guiding light of God in our world. Through the Spirit, God penetrates and reveals the darkness of human sin, helps people grow and become the people they are meant to be. I believe in the power of transformation, through God's spirit and light, here in this world and in the world to come. Amen.

Offering

If you are able, please continue to send in your offering and pledge. If you are enrolled in electronic funds transfer, there is no need to do anything different. If you would like to give online using Paypal, click this link: bit.ly/FPCsterling

Prayer of Dedication

Even as the light of the star led the Magi to Jesus, O God, let us be lights shining in the darkness. And as the Magi brought their gifts to honor the newborn king, let our gifts bring glory and honor to you. We pray in the name of the One born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Leader: The Lord be with you

People: And also with you

Leader: Lift up your hearts, wise people of God

People: We lift them up to the Lord

Leader: Let us give our thanks and praise to the one who beckons us to come

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise

Leader: Shining and radiant God, on that first bright morning of creation, you spoke and your glory filled the earth. You beckoned us to come to you and journey alongside you, and we could have lived with you in endless light and glory. But we wandered away, down other paths, on journeys of our own making, losing our way and straying into the wilderness of sin. You sent prophets to light the way, but we did not listen. Finally, through the darkness of our despair, you sent Jesus, to shine out in the darkness and lead us back to you. So we join our voices with those wise ones from the East, who came to worship you.

Response:

We three kings of Orient are

Bearing gifts we traverse afar.

Field and fountain, moor and mountain,

Following yonder star.

Leader: You are holy God, and blessed is your son Jesus Christ, our light and our guide. He came from heaven and walk the road of the cross, walking to Calvary and to the house of death, the rising and making a path from the tomb toward you, so that we can find and follow the path to new life in him. So, as we prepare to journey with him this year, we speak of that mystery called faith, revealed to us through Christ, the morning star of love; the radiant star of resurrection; the constellation of hope.

Response:

**O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect Light.**

Leader: Holy God, you love both wise and foolish. Send down your Spirit of wisdom upon those gathered around this Table, and on the gifts of the bread and the cup, that they might make us your faithful and loving children, ready to seek your light and your path, and travel the road you set before us.

Response

**Glorious now behold Him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice.
Alleluia, Alleluia
Sounds through the earth and skies.**

Words of Institution

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

Prayer After the Supper

Leader: Maker of Stars, you have fed us on the bread of hope and refreshed us with the cup of grace. Now as we go from this place, help us to travel another road, to defend the weak, to speak for the voiceless, to assist those cast aside. Send us forth to enter the houses of the strangers in our midst; to enter the despair of the lonely and forgotten; to enter the hearts of everyone we meet and invite them to join us, and you on this journey.

Response

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect Light.

God's People are Sent

Closing Songs

We Three Kings

We three kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright;
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light!

Glorious now behold Him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice;
Alleluia, Alleluia
sounds through the earth and skies.

O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright;
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light!

What Child is This?

What Child is this, who laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.

This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

Benediction

Leader:....and let all God's people say...

People: Alleluia! Amen!